

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 432
By Haynes

A RESOLUTION to honor and thank on behalf of the grateful
State of Tennessee the first lady of Tennessee
politics, Senator Anna Belle Clement O'Brien.

WHEREAS, **POLITICS IS A BEAUTIFUL WORD TO ME**, I believe - with all my heart
that - Politics makes handicapped children walk; Politics builds these highways, Politics makes
Education more accessible to everyone; Politics makes the Mentally Ill have a better life; Politics
helps working people, senior citizens and children!!; and

WHEREAS, we honor a woman who has graced the State Capitol with her presence for
the last forty years and taught us all to look for the beauty in politics - the first lady of Tennessee
politics, Miss Anna Belle Clement O'Brien; and

WHEREAS, her compassion, commitment and dedication to the people of Tennessee
have been evident throughout her entire forty year public service career; and

WHEREAS, she comes from the distinguished Clement family of Tennessee, which has
given much, so even the least amongst us could benefit, and endured much, so that many could
be inspired; and

WHEREAS, her successful career in public service was rooted in the past, having been
born the second child and first daughter to Robert Samuel Clement and Maybelle Goad
Clement with the proper pedigree to become an orator and born leader in Tennessee politics;
and

WHEREAS, the citizens of Tennessee first became acquainted with Miss Anna Belle as a campaign operative when her brother, Frank Goad Clement, was elected Governor in 1952 and the Clement family political dynasty was born; and

WHEREAS, Miss Anna Belle started her public service career in 1955 as an assistant to future Governor Buford Ellington, who was then serving as commissioner of the department of agriculture under Governor Clement; and

WHEREAS, upon the election of Buford Ellington to the office of governor she served as his executive assistant and upon the reelection of Frank Clement she was her brother's first appointment as his administrative assistant making her the first female chief of staff to the Governor in Tennessee history; and

WHEREAS, in his last inaugural address Governor Frank Clement said, **“There must be a constant movement toward a higher, and nobler and better way of life.”** and working side by side with her brother, Miss Anna Belle was instrumental in the outstanding achievements and legacy of the Clement Administration: free textbooks for Tennessee's school children; healthcare for the poor; the creation of programs for our youth; and humane treatment and care of the mentally ill and equality for all people; and

WHEREAS, Miss Anna Belle is fond of saying “politics got me a good husband”; she left public service in 1966 upon her marriage to Charles O'Brien; and

WHEREAS, “her good husband” has also had a distinguished career in public service, first in the State Senate and then in the judicial branch culminating with his appointment as Chief Justice of the Tennessee Supreme Court; and

WHEREAS, in 1974, with a desire to return to public service to help the handicapped children of Tennessee, she ran for and won election to the Tennessee House of Representatives on a platform of education, rural roads, mental healthcare and helping the handicapped; and

WHEREAS, in 1976, once again using her campaign slogan of “About our district, she will tell, Let’s elect Miss Anna Belle!” she won election to the Tennessee State Senate as only the second woman in state history to win a senate seat; and

WHEREAS, in moments of heated debate, of frayed nerves and high emotions, the gracious lady from Cumberland County has sought recognition and stood on the Senate floor to speak calming words that rang of conviction and necessity - to do the right thing, to remember the less fortunate, to be fair and to remind us in our prosperity that it has not always been so with Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, during her time in office, Senator O’Brien has become the first and only woman in Tennessee history to be named chair of a standing committee of either House of the General Assembly, having chaired the Senate Transportation Committee and the Senate Education Committee; and

WHEREAS, in 1982 the Senate Democratic Caucus turned to her when seeking a worthy opponent to the Governor then in office and Miss Anna Belle blazed the trail for many women in Tennessee to run for higher office; and

WHEREAS, while running for Governor she simultaneously chaired the Tennessee Comprehensive Education Study from which came the education reform movement that was otherwise known as the “Better Schools Program”; and

WHEREAS, during her service as chair of the Senate Education Committee and the Joint Oversight Committee on Education, she helped oversee the most comprehensive and dynamic reform of classroom education in the history of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Maybelle Clement always advised her daughter to be a Baptist and be a good Democrat, so Senator O’Brien obeyed her mother and, in 1994, became the chair of the Senate Democratic Caucus and has tirelessly campaigned statewide for Democratic candidates; and

WHEREAS, during her Senate career she has been a champion for state employees, teachers, civil rights, school children, the handicapped, the mentally ill and the underprivileged; and

WHEREAS, Senator O'Brien has sponsored and passed hundreds of bills and resolutions, and especially notable was the creation of the landmark Tennessee Living Will Law; and

WHEREAS, Miss Anna Belle, after suffering a personal battle with breast cancer, was honored by the American Cancer Society for her work in the passage of the Mammography Screening Act; and

WHEREAS, Senator O'Brien has been called by colleagues the most effective legislator in Nashville and has proven time and again that when an issue is important to her district she will go the distance to see that goal achieved, that highway built, or that program funded: as Lieutenant Governor John Wilder says "She is committed and she is involved"; and

WHEREAS, she has mentored many freshmen legislators, staff members, interns, lobbyists and young people with her anecdotes and words of wisdom, but her greatest contribution is the extraordinary example she sets as a role model; and

WHEREAS, Miss Anna Belle was always successful and effective because she lived by the golden rule of "always planning your work and working your plan"; and

WHEREAS, Senator O'Brien has made it fashionable to apply lipstick in committee and on the Senate floor, she has thus made Tennessee an even more beautiful state in which to live; and

WHEREAS, Miss Anna Belle, skipping down the halls on her way to the Capitol in her trashy earrings, White Linen perfume, and high heel shoes, will be greatly missed by us all; and

WHEREAS, Miss Anna Belle has shared her many triumphs and accomplishments with her large and loving family: her husband, Charles O'Brien; her step-children, Diane and Neil Solomon, and Heather and Jan Hahn; her grandchildren, Charles David Solomon, James

Thomas Solomon, Micah Brianne O'Brien Hahn, Avital Elizabeth O'Brien Hahn, and Mara Gabrielle O'Brien Hahn; and her great-grandson, Hunter William Parker; and

WHEREAS, she is also supported in her endeavors by her sister and brother-in-law Emma Gene and Bruce Peery; and nieces and nephews Bruce Young Peery, Ann and Warren Whitis, Don and Mary Beth Peery, Sara and Jim Kyle, Robert and Carrie Peery, Betty Belle and Riley Sloan, Bob and Mary Clement, and Frank and Erma Clement; and all her great-nieces and nephews; and

WHEREAS, the majestic Senator O'Brien lives her life as a builder of eternity and with her "kit of tools and set of rules", she has built stepping stones across the state of Tennessee, for which we owe her a debt of gratitude; and

WHEREAS, for nearly half a century, Senator O'Brien provided this General Assembly with grace, wisdom, leadership and insight that will never be equaled, or surpassed and without question, will be greatly missed; and

WHEREAS, it is now highly appropriate that the friends, family and colleagues past and present of this outstanding public servant should honor her and recognize the tremendous contribution to the good of our great state; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That we hereby express our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to Senator Anna Belle Clement O'Brien for her innumerable and incalculable services to Tennessee, and we honor her for her distinguished career. Politics is a beautiful word but never have politics been more beautiful than Anna Belle Clement O'Brien.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.

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